

**STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE EDUCATION
OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

June 20, 2003
Indiana Department of Education
Indianapolis, Indiana

APPROVED MINUTES

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Julie Swaim, Marcia Johnson, Kyle Aldridge, Elaine Scaife, Mary Ramos, Cynthia Diamond, Craig Bell, Rose Black, Steve Cook, Lanier DeGrella, Jim Hammond, Bessie Henson, Terry Huser, Brian Ketzner, Becky Kirk, Glennn Tebbe, Steve Tilden

DOE STAFF PRESENT:

Bob Marra, Becky Bowman, Kylee Bassett, Michelle Estep

ISEAS STAFF PRESENT:

Gary Collings

OTHERS PRESENT:

Gerry Wagner, Ken Miller, Marty Dezelan, Barb Maschino, Stephanie Gerner

Julie Swaim, vice chair, called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM. Council members reviewed minutes from the April 25, 2003 Council meeting. Ms. Swaim asked for a motion on the draft minutes. Mary Ramos asked for clarification in the minutes regarding a question posed by Julie Swaim.

MOTION: Ms. Ramos moved to amend the minutes to reflect Ms. Swaim's question to Tom Doyle as how many parents of special education students are involved, rather than how many parents of students are involved. Glennn Tebbe seconded the motion. There was a call for vote, and the motion to amend the draft minutes passed by unanimous vote.

MOTION: Craig Bell moved and Terry Huser seconded the motion to approve the draft minutes as amended. It was asked for a motion to approve the draft minutes as amended. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Gerry Wagner, director of the Virtual Cooperative, presented the revisions to the cooperative's comprehensive plan, which consisted of the addition of other charter schools to the existing cooperative. Mr. Wagner explained that, shortly after the Division's approval of the Virtual Cooperative's comprehensive plan, member schools of the Indianapolis Charter Special Services (ICSS) expressed an interest in having him serve as the interim director for ICSS. That situation subsequently evolved into a request by the ICSS member schools to become a part of the Virtual Cooperative

(thereby dissolving the ICSS). Options Charter School and Signature Learning Center also contacted Mr. Wagner to request consideration of their membership in the Virtual Cooperative.

This discussion led to the proposed expansion of the Virtual Cooperative membership. It was noted that a larger membership provides greater opportunity for collaboration. Mr. Wagner reviewed the existing and proposed membership of the cooperative. He also explained that the fundamental intent to connect the member schools through technology remains intact. The goal is to provide quality services to students with disabilities by ensuring that members operate with sound procedures and process with maximum utilization of available resources in order to achieve desired outcomes. This approach will facilitate progress.

Bob Marra pointed out that Burris is part of the Cooperative, but not a charter school, and that the “addendum” to the comprehensive plan document contains helpful information about the individual schools.

Mr. Wagner commented on the immensely dedicated people working with the schools and their strong commitment to successful outcomes. He has received positive cooperation from the members.

Becky Kirk identified three things she wanted addressed:

- (1) How will parental access to the director be ensured in light of the geographic distance between the schools and the special education director locations?
- (2) Will parents be encouraged to start with the LEA, and will they be informed of what to do if they need to go further?
- (3) Is there any concern about parents’ lack of technology and the expense of long distance service in contacting the cooperative/director in light of the geographic distances?

Mr. Wagner stated that one of the goals is uniformity of policies and procedures in order to ensure parents’ awareness of how to access the cooperative or the director. Currently, there is no toll-free number, but this will be addressed with the University. To date, they have not had any problem with parents being able to contact the director

Ms. Kirk encouraged the use of the toll-free number to increase accessibility. Mr. Wagner concurred that this would be important and believes he is very accessible.

Mr. Marra suggested that information about contacting Mr. Wagner could be included on the notice of procedural safeguards, and Mr. Wagner concurred.

Ms. Kirk also noted the director’s discretion to create a parent advisory board, and questioned how this would work given the geographic limitations. Ms. Kirk also indicated that she supports the creation and utilization of parent advisory groups.

Mr. Wagner explained that there is a certain “regionalization” of the schools based on their current location with some outliers. He suggested that technology could be utilized to allow parents to talk to each other and share with other parents globally. He added that the more parents are involved, in whatever way, the better. In response to Ms. Kirk’s question about Mr. Wagner’s current thinking about establishing a parent advisory group, Mr. Wagner responded that parental “buy-in” is very important and he believes

such buy-in currently exists. It is his intent to promote the establishment of a parent advisory council.

Ms. Kirk noted that the plan contains a number of items “to be announced” and indicated her concern that this may be problematic with start up and staff availability.

Mr. Wagner commented that, with schools just starting up both this year and next, it is difficult for them to identify a specific service provider. However, each school is aware of the requirement. The cooperative will be able to assist as things get rolling to allow services to at least part of the membership. He noted looking at maximizing efficiency and resources and that, although all members understand the obligation, it is hard for entities not up and running to identify a particular provider.

Ms. Kirk asked for and received assurance from Mr. Wagner that all services will be in place for those schools who are already operational or begin operation in Fall 2003. Mr. Wagner added that other providers would be added as the students present particular needs.

Cynthia Diamond noted that two of the “to be announced” charter school will not open until the 2004-2005 school year (KIPP and Charles Tindley schools). Mr. Wagner offered that, although these schools will not be operational until the next school year, they’re “on board” with what needs to be done.

Ms. Swaim inquired if Mr. Wagner had an office, and he reported that he has an office both at home and in Muncie.

Jim Hammond asked whether a member charter school that is the recipient of additional independent funds (grants, bequests) have to provide the money to the Cooperative. Mr. Wagner explained that the Section VI of the comprehensive plan states that schools receive state and federal grant funds. The federal funds will be managed by the cooperative, for which Ball State University is the fiscal agent. There is no automatic remittance from the member schools.

Mr. Hammond also asked what transition programs are in place for charter schools serving 12th grade students. Mr. Wagner replied that the cooperative would assist the member schools with these programs.

Terry Huser noted that the comprehensive plan referenced staff and other co-op staff in the future. Mr. Wagner responded that realistically, with 19 entities and the geographic issues, it is likely that additional staff will be needed.

Marcia Johnson inquired whether professional development is a cooperative or member school responsibility. Mr. Wagner explained that professional development for special education personnel will be the joint responsibility of the cooperative and the member school.

Ms. Swaim asked about professional development for general education teachers with special education students in their classrooms, and Mr. Wagner replied that he looked for ways to include, influence and involve general education personnel in professional development activities.

Steve Cook asked how to utilize parents in program improvement activities. He also asked what is going to be in place to allow parents to participate in systems’

improvement? Mr. Wagner explained that each member school has an approach to parental involvement in the special education process, and that they need to identify the need at each location and address that need without reinventing the wheel. He noted that collaboration will be key along with using what others have already demonstrated to be effective.

Ms. Swaim said that the most important thing that's often forgotten is "ask the parents." Mr. Wagner agreed and said that, without question, what makes charters different from traditional public schools is the increased parental involvement.

Brian Ketzner inquired about the information on the staffing ratio at Options Charter School. Barbara Maschino from Options provided a response. Mr. Wagner indicated that those numbers are likely to change with membership in the cooperative.

Mr. Wagner noted the lack of existing staff for students who present with more serious needs, and he is looking at school staffing availability and the capabilities of the member schools as single entities or as a group. He acknowledged that, although it is unlikely that students with significant special needs will present frequently at a member school, he understands the obligation of having to meet the student's individual needs. He also noted that member schools are looking for multi-certified personnel.

Steve Tilden requested an explanation of the "virtual" aspects and plans for technology. Mr. Wagner reported that the University is collaborating with Apple to look at the creation of a total system to provide audio and visual computer capability. Some of this capability is currently operational at a couple of sites on the campus. The process is evolving and he hopes it will be operational within the cooperative during the early part of the upcoming school year. He also noted that the addition of other members (dependent on the Council's approval) will impact the system's development.

Ms. Kirk asked Mr. Wagner: what needs the most attention the soonest, what is the most difficult, and how do you feel about where you are right now? Mr. Wagner responded that, if the comprehensive plan is approved, an obstacle to moving forward for those seeking to join is removed. The basic message is making sure everyone is on same page where uniformity of process/procedures and forms are concerned. Also, the technology issue needs to be pursued immediately given the geographic differences. Mr. Wagner also noted the need to address certain personnel issues to determine whether such personnel are needed through the cooperative's resources and ensuring that appropriate personnel are available at member schools at the beginning of the school year.

Mr. Marra concurred that the process/procedures and standardization are critical and that the key to the success is getting appropriate personnel in place.

Ms. Diamond stated that for ICSS schools, having Gerry Wagner as an interim director allowed establishing a relationship, along with the collaboration with the Indiana Charter Schools Association. The Association has initiated some committees on parental involvement and some charter authorizers require parental involvement as a condition of the charter. A number of charter schools have already established parent organizations.

Mr. Huser noted that the cooperative's advisory board has a representative from each member school. He inquired if future growth was anticipated. Mr. Wagner replied that additional members were possible, although the growth of charter schools has slowed.

Mr. Huser followed up by asking if going from 6 to 19 members caused concern of being spread too thin? Mr. Wagner acknowledged this possibility and indicated that the cooperative may need to consider additional administrative support; however, right now, it is manageable. He continued that he wanted to make sure to have things in place to serve kids' needs before addressing any need or concern about additional administrative support.

Ms. Johnson commented that she appreciates the work involved in order to serve special education kids in charter schools under one umbrella. She stated that the key to successful effort will be special education director, and Gerry Wagner is a good choice. She also noted that working with 19 different school administrators could be a challenge.

Mr. Hammond asked if there is a point to which the schools are "oversubscribed" that will result in a waiting list for students to receive services? Mr. Wagner explained that special education must be provided as needed, which leads to the same practical realities as public schools face. He noted that a free appropriate public education is the benchmark for students with disabilities in charter schools, just as it is in the public schools.

Mr. Hammond followed up by inquiring about child find in the charter schools. Mr. Marra pointed out that child find in the charter schools is different from traditional public school in that in charters it is internal child find, rather than a "community-wide" child find.

Ms. Diamond noted that charter schools look to directors to help them ensure special education compliance and services to students and that they respect the need for the right special education director.

Mr. Tebbe inquired about the reason the new member schools have opted to join the Virtual Cooperative rather than remain with their previous arrangement. Mr. Wagner indicated that Signature Learning Center's relationship with the Evansville-Vanderburgh-Posey Special Education Cooperative changed, resulting in Signature's request to join the Virtual Cooperative. Ms. Maschino commented that Options originally applied to the Hamilton Boone Madison Special Education Cooperative, but was denied membership. She also noted that, although Options successfully operated as a single corporation planning district, there is significant benefit to being member of a cooperative, including collaboration and additional resources.

MOTION:

Terry Huser moves and Craig Bell seconds a motion to recommend approval of the revised comprehensive plan of the Virtual Cooperative.

DISCUSSION:

Rose Black inquired about evacuation plans for students with disabilities. Mr. Wagner indicated that, although such plans are not discussed in the comprehensive plan, he is aware of the requirement for member schools to have an evacuation plan.

Ms. Black also inquired whether any of the new member schools had accessibility issues/problems. Mr. Wagner indicated that there are no concerns.

Ms. Black asked about a parent advisory committee and how Mr. Wagner planned to get parents involved. Mr. Wagner noted again that parent involvement is critical and that member schools establish (if not already established) a mechanism to work with their

parents. He indicated that he will look at what's in place and how to capitalize on technology to increase participation

Ms. Aldridge asked about the use of a lottery for enrollment and whether all of the member schools used such a method. Marty Dezelan , Ball State University, indicated that there is an open enrollment for each school, but if the school is oversubscribed, a blind lottery is used.

Ms. Swaim calls for a vote.

VOTE:

By voice vote, with Cynthia Diamond abstaining, the Council unanimously votes to recommend approval of the Virtual Cooperative's revised comprehensive plan.

Mr. Marra provided an update on the current House proposal for the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. He reported that he had provided written comments on the House version to Senator Bayh's office, noting the areas of funding, SEA accountability and enforcement sanctions, three-year IEPs, due process, evaluation, and manifestation determination changes. The Senate has not yet voted on it proposed version. A Senate Committee is expected to forward a proposal later this month. There is no indication when the reauthorization will be enacted, and it could be delayed until 2004. Once the IDEA is reauthorized, the US Department of Education must promulgate regulations and then Article 7 will have to be revised. The Council will play a major role in the changes to be made to Article 7.

Mr. Marra also reported on a new alternate assessment known as ISTAR (Indians Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting). There is an issue with proposed federal regulations regarding a 1% limit on students who can take the alternate assessment without impacting a school's adequate yearly progress calculation.

NEXT MEETING:

September 12, 2003 (9:30 AM) at the Omni North Hotel

FUTURE MEETINGS:

November 14, 2003 (9:30 AM) Location to be announced

February 13, 2004 (9:30 AM) Location to be announced

May 7, 2004 (9:30 AM) Location to be announced

MOTION:

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Terry Huser and seconded by Marcia Johnson. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 11:25 AM.